

**DULUTH AMERICAN INDIAN COMMISSION MEETING**  
**Monday, June 18, 2007 - 5:00 p.m.**  
**Room 402 - Fourth Floor, City Hall**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Dr. Robert Powless, Donna Ennis, Warner Wirta, Tony LaDeaux, John Day, Ricky Defoe, Mike Sayers, Beatrice Kitto, Joy Dorscher, Michele Gordon, Brian Wilson

**EXCUSED ABSENT:** none

**ABSENT:** none

**STAFF PRESENT:** John Judd

**OTHERS PRESENT:** See sign-in sheet

**CALL TO ORDER, APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND INTRODUCTIONS:**

**Motion by John Day, seconded by Dr. Powless, to approve the agenda with one additional item under Old Business (Civilian Review Board update by Tony LaDeaux), an additional speaker under Community Public Forum/Open Public Comment Period (Ron Boshey), and a correction of the spelling of Greg Maxham's name. The motion was unanimously approved.**

**REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM MAY 21, 2007 MEETING:**

**Motion by John Day, seconded by Brian Wilson, to approve the minutes of the May 21, 2007 meeting. The motion was unanimously approved.**

**COMMUNITY PUBLIC FORUM / OPEN PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD:**

**Barrels discussion** – Greg Price distributed a document addressed to the U.S. Congress and President Bush concerning barrels of toxic materials dumped into Lake Superior by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Glen Maxham of the Save Lake Superior Association reiterated those concerns. Price and Maxham are trying to spread the word about the possible resulting contamination and asked the Commission to support a resolution. Donna Ennis asked if Maxham agreed with Price's request to test sediment before barrels are removed. Ricky Defoe reminded the group that Lake Superior is a sacred site. Defoe will review the draft resolution and bring it back to the Commission for review. Maxham can be contacted at gmaxham@aol.com or 727-4554.

**Police incidents involving excessive force** – Jerry Benjamin III described an incident in which Duluth Police stopped him and a friend who were in Benjamin's car (with his friend driving) on May 26, 2007. When Mr. Benjamin panicked and ran, Officer Copp

sicked a dog on him and continued to do so after he was down. Michele Gordon asked LaDeaux if he would help Benjamin in seeking legal counsel, and LaDeaux agreed.

Discussion followed regarding inviting Chief Gordon Ramsey to the Commission meetings on an occasional basis.

**Motion by John Day, seconded by Joy Dorscher, to form a subcommittee devoted to police-related issues to meet with Ramsey. The motion was unanimously approved.**

Day, Dorscher, and Powless volunteered to serve on this subcommittee and were so appointed.

Ron Boshey reported a situation that took place on June 10, 2007, in which his brother Joe got in an argument with a white man at a party outside Ron's Hermantown home; a fight ensued. Someone called the police, and seven Hermantown squad cars showed up on the scene. St. Louis County deputies also appeared. Police gave conflicting instructions to Joe before firing a Taser at him even though he was facing the officers with his hands in the air. He was shot two more times in the back with the Taser. A one-sided article about the incident appeared in the Duluth News Tribune the following day. The media ignored Ron Boshey's request to present his side of the story. He offered his phone number and e-mail address for those who want more information: 729-8207 or [rnboshey@yahoo.com](mailto:rnboshey@yahoo.com).

Gordon suggested inviting Indian Legal Aid representatives to a future Commission meeting.

#### **OLD BUSINESS:**

**Report on the Indian Center / Housing Project** – Dr. Powless acknowledged Sherry Sanchez-Tibbetts' (who is in Washington, DC) efforts. A matching donor has come forward, and the funding picture looks very promising.

**Planning for DAIC Community Forum - Date-August 23, Place-Washington Center, Agenda, Organization, promotion (review draft flyer). Preparation, set-up. Food/beverage supply and after-meeting clean-up.**

The Hillside will publish information about the forum in its August issue. Tribal newspapers will also be provided with forum information. Ennis brought a draft of the flyer, which was fine-tuned by the Commission. The Commission has to come up with a budget and an agenda. A budget of \$200-\$500 was proposed. Gordon will donate a P.A. system. Judd suggested inviting various nonprofit organizations to send representatives to staff information tables. Mike Sayers said that some politicians have approached him about making an appearance. Discussion about inviting craft vendors ended with agreement that this could be a good draw. Subcommittee consisting of

Commission members Ennis, Sayers, and Gordon was formed. Dr. Powless offered to be the Master of Ceremonies.

**Civilian Review Board Report** – Tony LaDeaux said the next meeting is scheduled for July 12 at 5:00 at the YWCA. This will be an independent entity. A 501-C-3 non-profit status will be sought. A challenge is presented by Bergeron of the Bureau of Criminal Investigation, who is attempting to undermine the Board.

#### **NEW BUSINESS:**

**Review of the Indian Child Welfare Act** - Gordon, Ennis, and Day distributed related documents for the Commission's perusal before discussing the subject at a future meeting. Dr. Powless asked that someone who knows the Act well summarize the information and send the summary to Minnesota judges after the Commission reviews it. Gordon suggested sending it to guardian ad litem and social workers as well. Day will serve on a subcommittee and asked that Carol DeVerney, who is a social worker at Fond du Lac Human Services, and a UMD social worker student be involved as well. DeVerney, who was present at the meeting, spoke about the obstacles to legal representation for parents in child welfare/CHIPS cases due to the fact that public defenders are not required to represent them in custody cases. State courts also throw road blocks in the way of Tribal Court decisions.

**Duluth Police Department Liaison Officer to the Commission** – Dr. Powless reported that Chief Ramsey asked if police liaison Officer Darryl Diver could be invited to Commission meetings. Powless suggested, and Day agreed, that specific topics be addressed when Officer Diver is present rather than having him attend simply as a representative of the police department. For our purposes, he would come by invitation. It may be less intimidating to the public for Diver to attend subcommittee meetings to discuss issues at hand. Concerns about Diver, who is Native American, being a token liaison who might not be taken seriously by his fellow officers, were expressed. All agreed that Diver would attend full Commission meetings by invitation. Dorscher, Day, and Powless will serve on the subcommittee to address related issues.

**Extensions of Terms for Current DAIC Members** – Mike Sayers will be appointed for a second term; other members whose terms are up but who wish to stay on the Commission will have their terms extended to the end of the year.

#### **ANNOUNCEMENTS, UPCOMING EVENTS AND COMMENTS FROM COMMISSION MEMBERS:**

Dr. Powless invited members to donate what they can to a graduate student acquaintance in need. He also reported that Chief Ramsey and his wife are brand-new parents.

Dr. Powless pointed out that in spite of the fact that the police were wrong in the excessive force cases presented today as well as in the Croud case, alcohol was a major factor. He asked the Commission to consider this very serious issue.

Wilson talked how much he was personally affected by what he has heard from the Save Lake Superior Association and others at Commission meetings about drinking water quality.

DeFoe mentioned prayer day (June 21) and how we should think about clean water issues not only on a local basis but also globally on that day. On the drinking issue, he pointed out that alcoholism is a major issue for non-Indians as well. Ennis' feeling is that even if alcohol had not been a factor, the police would have found another reason to justify their discrimination.

Beatrice Kitto and LaDeaux expressed their deep concerns about police brutality toward Native Americans and the prevalence of alcoholism among Natives.

Warner Wirta spoke of the legacy of disease and discrimination that has silenced Native American voices and how we are now on the cutting edge to address the difficult issues facing us.

Day found reason to be optimistic about how the many layers of sovereignty are working together.

Gordon expressed her appreciation for the opportunity to discuss Native issues at Commission meetings.

Dorscher acknowledged and thanked Gordon for her mediation skills and wisdom she brings to the Commission.

**NEXT MEETING/DATE/LOCATION:** July 16, 2007, Room 407 of City Hall.

**ADJOURNMENT:** 8:50 p.m.